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BY
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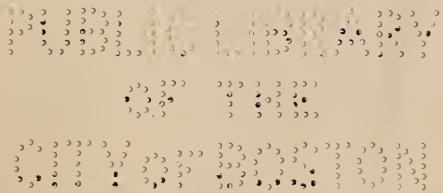

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A distinguished man was once asked what in his opinion was the greatest service a teacher of music could render his pupils. Without hesitation he replied, "Give them a broad view."

It was characteristic of Mr. MacDowell that he gave this broad view to all those who came under his influence. Indeed, singularly enough, had he never elected the art of teaching as it is generally understood, he still would have been a teacher through his writings. No one can study his compositions without a conscious or unconscious gain in breadth of musical vision. The mere technician will find them illy suited to exploitation, pure and simple. But the novice in search of musical values, the student interested in all that is great in music whether belonging to the past or present, the artist who will be quick to see that

> "Music resembles poetry; in each
> Are nameless graces, which no methods teach,
> And which a master's hand alone can reach!"

these, and their name is legion, will find in the

works of Mr. MacDowell that inspiration which comes only from contact with noble writing.

Since the death of this composer in 1907, the world has become familiar with his life and what it has meant to music. Essays and books have contained much that is helpful to know concerning him and his writings.

Many people have asked me about Mr. MacDowell who claim to know nothing of music in general, or of his music in particular. To those of us to whom music is as the breath of our nostrils he indeed belongs in a very rare and uncommon way. But it also happens that the world of music and the busy work-a-day world have been drawn very closely together by a common interest in his writings. It is because of this genuine interest that I feel impelled to write just a little out of my own experience.

We had been hearing a wonderful reading of the MacDowell "Indian Suite," given by the Thomas Orchestra in Chicago. The audience in the great Auditorium had been strangely thrilled by Mr. Thomas' reading of this score. I knew the daily papers would be sent the composer containing accounts of this presentation, and that his heart would be gladdened by the reception given the

composition and the favor it had met with, but I felt impelled to add my word also, in the form of a letter. I think musicians, artists and writers often labor under the impression that their fellow-workers are receiving very heavy mails of this sort. The opposite is more frequently the case. Indeed, instances have been recorded where no word at all has come, so sure were people that "every one else" was sending the meed of appreciation. I therefore courageously sent forth my little letter telling of the effect the work had had upon me. At the same time I said how glad I would have been to have written the so-called "little" pieces, "Thy Beaming Eyes" and "To a Wild Rose," for the reason that their message was such a transparent one that they seemed to belong to the people in that large sense which for lack of a better word we call "popular," in its truest and best meaning. I did not expect an answer from this composer-teacher, fully realizing how his every moment must be mortgaged ahead. Yet he took time to send me the following letter. I feel that it belongs to the world now as it throws a little light upon his own attitude towards the "Indian Suite." It reads:

Columbia University
In the City of New York
Department of Music

September 10, 1898.

My Dear Mrs. Adams:—Thank you for your kind note. That my Indian Suite has found favor with the public is a matter of much gratification to me — specially perhaps, because of my own doubts as to the power of this rough, savage music to appeal to our concert audiences. I held it back a number of years for this reason. I do not expect to play in Chicago this winter, but if I should do so, I trust I will have the opportunity of expressing personally to you my appreciation of your kind letter.

Believe me yours faithfully,

Edward MacDowell.

Is not the phrase "I held it back a number of years" indicative of a nature, that for fear of misunderstanding, as well as for other nameless reasons, "held back" what the world was waiting to hear?

My second experience was this: Mr. and Mrs. MacDowell were wont to plan every seven years what they termed their "Sabbatical Year." This period was set aside for concert work and various other musical activities somewhat out of the usual routine. During one of these tournees, on Februany 4, 1899, Mr. MacDowell played for the Amateur Musical Club of Chicago. I fancy he found

it always difficult to meet clubs and people in this way. The exigencies of his life as a teacher and composer left comparatively little free time for the perfecting of the technical finish demanded by concert appearances, and he must inevitably be compared with those pianistic giants who stride across our country, each outdoing the other in the matter of astounding feats. Audiences are often bewildered by such dexterity and fail to realize that their part is not to institute comparisons, but to listen to the "still small voice" of music when such a voice is heard, or to its opposite, the thunder of music, if it is reverberating musical thunder, instead of piano pounding.

This concert or artist recital which Mr. MacDowell played for us in Chicago brought to light the following program:

I

Fantasia in D.....Mozart
Les Trois Mains.....Rameau
Impromptu.....Schubert
Notturno, Op. 54, No. 5.....Grieg
Midsummer Night's Dream, Op. 36, No. 4.....Templeton Strong
Berceuse.....Chopin
Amourette, Op. 1.....Edgar Thorn
Witches' Dance, Op. 17, No. 2.....MacDowell

II

Second Sonata (Eroica), Op. 50 ..... MacDowell
"Flos regnum Arthurus"
I—Slow, with nobility
II—Elf-like, light and swift as possible
III—Tenderly, longingly, yet with passion

III

From an Indian Lodge, Op. 51, No. 4 ..... MacDowell
Idyl, Op. 28, No. 4 ..... MacDowell
Elfin Dance, Op. 46, No. 5 ..... MacDowell
In Mid-Ocean, Op. 55, No. 8 ..... MacDowell
Czardas, Op. 24, No. 4 ..... MacDowell
The Eagle, Op. 32, No. 1 ..... MacDowell
Shadow Dance, Op. 32, No. 7 ..... MacDowell
Poem, Op. 31, No. 2 ..... MacDowell
Concert Study, Op. 36 ..... MacDowell

Will any who are so fortunate as to have heard him as a pianist forget these programs, given from point to point throughout our land? After he had paid his musical respects to the old masters to whom he ever gave heed (though he was so intense a modern that the Sonata form to him was, indeed, only a form to hold the content he poured into it) we were privileged to hear the remainder of the program devoted to his own writings. The reading he gave his works was a revelation, I am sure, to many who were present. To me he seemed to possess more of that power that Rubinstein had,

that elementalness, that touch of art and humanity both, that lifted one above the contemplation of piano playing into the realm of music. There are to be found here and there, both amateurs and artists with the divine touch, and when music flows from their fingers, one does not forget the message. I am sure Mr. MacDowell did wisely to give us these opportunities, all too infrequent, to hear him in his own works. I count it one of the privileges of a concert-going life to have listened to his interpretations.

At the conclusion of the recital I waited a moment to speak to him of a mutual friend in New York, and to venture a few remarks of the pleasure his readings had given me. It was not easy for me to express this in words. While it was, I know, a gratification to him to hear that his music had made its appeal, I could feel that the morning program had been an ordeal. I had hoped to meet Mrs. MacDowell, who always traveled with him, but who had in this instance been unavoidably detained. He felt the loss of her sympathetic companionship most keenly, and spoke longingly of his home. Had it not been for these tours, comparatively few people would have known Mr. MacDowell as a pianist.

With a composer as individual as Mr. MacDowell, it is inevitable that there will always be estimable artists lacking in the poetical side to whom his music will carry no message whatsoever. As an instance, I recall a conversation with a pianist of international reputation who showed us a pile of this composer's music lying unused in the cabinet in his music studio. He said, "They are queer. I cannot use them." I wanted to say, "Oh, no! They are not queer." The pianist in question belongs to the school of technical conjurers, not to the school of poets. I doubt if he had, indeed, read the poets intimately, or he would have remembered, even dimly, perhaps, that Austin Dobson said:

> With pipe and flute the rustic Pan
> Of old made music sweet for man;
> And wonder hushed the warbling bird,
> And closer drew the calm-eyed herd,—
> The rolling river slowlier ran.
>
> Ah! would,—ah! would, a little span
> Some air of Arcady could fan
> This age of ours, too seldom stirred
> With pipe and flute!

Mr. MacDowell's music has been and will continue to be of immense value in the life of the

music student, and, I may add with equal force, to the music lover. For the student of average attainment he has left many a precious legacy. For the artist of large musical grasp he has provided great compositions, wondrously satisfying to those who understand the art of interpretation, but, as I said before, baffling enough to the mere technician. Whether the canvas be large or small, the artist has sketched for us rare values.

Let us consider for a few moments some of this literature for the piano, beginning with "To a wild rose." What does not that present with its lines of simple beauty! Like many others of its kind from this pen, it is technically easy and musically difficult. Consider the task the composer sets himself to translate into terms of music the pictures of nature. No more beautiful flower exists than the wild rose. No one has caught its delicate texture and fragrance and expressed it for piano as has MacDowell. The mediator who stands between the composer and the listener has no uncertain task before him, as he essays to interpret the writings of this or any other poet-musician. Mr. MacDowell was so free from sentimentality, so averse to pretense of any kind, that he tried always to tell us in plain terminology

how to play his compositions, at least, as far as a body ever can tell! To him the piano was "the arena of fancy," the friend to whom he had confided his "innermost ideas." To express these ideas, to translate this fancy into symbols, to capture

> "Delicious sounds! those little bright-eyed things
> That float about the air on azure wings,"

this was no small problem. What composer but has felt the utter lack of the language not only of music itself but of the words of direction that should convey his meaning? Unless the interpreter can read between the lines, no explanations are ever adequate. Even with that insight, what teacher of interpretation but has been astonished at the various readings of the same piece by different students. Take Mr. MacDoweli's "Scotch Poem," for instance. Here we find a verse, "After Heine," a text to give the atmosphere of the composition. As to the piece itself, its impetuous sweep gets well under way, when suddenly the novice is confronted with six notes against four, to say nothing of some strange duolas not far ahead! To not interrupt the sweep, to feel the rhythm, to maintain poise and yet proceed with the musical mes-

sage without let or hindrance is a good problem for the young student to work out. It is never an easy task for a composer to set such passages down on paper, to convey his intentions. Again, over on the next page of this piece we find that to suggest the harp strings is one thing, but to play these chords with arpeggiated freedom and beauty of tone, with due reference to values, is quite another.

The "Nautilus," with its beautiful musical coloring, is a piece needing an exceedingly deft handling and a poet-interpreter. But what of the "Starlight," the "Wandering Iceberg," the "Autumn," the "Indian Lodge," indeed any or all of these sketches from "Sea Pieces" and "Woodland Sketches?" This composer has given us nature pictures worthy of the highest appreciation and consideration. And "The Eagle!" I knew a pioneer who helped to blaze the way into forests when this country was new, who was "personally acquainted," as he expressed it, with an eagle on old Niagara River. This old gentleman thoroughly understood this musical picture and loved to hear it played.

If you wish to know just how the "Old White Pine" looks that Mr. MacDowell is describing to

you in "The New England Idyls," study the picture on page 23, of a very interesting book called, "Among Green Trees," by Julia Ellen Rogers. And if you have never been "In Deep Woods," you will find its very atmosphere in the wonderful tone-poem by that name from the same "Idyls." Here we are confronted at the outset with such shifts of harmonic combinations that the composer does not especially concern himself with the tonality, or with key-signature even, but projects various key possibilities of such short duration that the ear is held spell-bound until the settling down into D major assures one of some sort of traditional observance.

These, and more, many more, of the MacDowell compositions belong to music lovers, not because they can always worthily interpret them, but because of the elemental truth they contain for each individual. Some of the writings are extremely difficult from the technical side, and without exception they all demand the most musical and poetical culture. Yet with these demands a noticeable gain in the stimulation of the ideals, and a growth in appreciation of music generally, will most likely be realized by the student who essays them. I think it is a significant fact that long be-

fore Mr. MacDowell's name was brought before the public as it is now, students in grammar grades and of early high school age were asking, "When can I study some of the MacDowell music?" This was not because this music was a fad. It never has been that. It can never be that. The element of truthfulness is its very essence. Mr. MacDowell united the four qualities Bach enumerated as so seldom to be found in one individual, namely, sympathy, knowledge, honesty and courage.

Mr. MacDowell for many years spent weeks in the heart of a forest which was a part of his beloved farm in New Hampshire. Here he could be alone or have the companionship of the home circle and an occasional choice friend or two, as he chose. In this environment he wrought out for us those nature pictures so characteristic, so truthful that they are epoch-making. He said once, "The city is only a place in which to make money enough to get out into the country." Evidently, he, too, was often "sick of four walls and a ceiling" and had "business with the grass," as Richard Burton has well expressed it. The manual labor of committing music pictures, like the "Tragica," "Keltic," "Norse" and "Eroica" sonatas and other

mighty writings of mighty themes to paper is little understood by those who do not write music. Many composers, full of joy with creations which are to bless the world, really stand appalled at times at the labor involved in transferring to paper their musical thoughts. It is never an easy task and sometimes it is an oppressive one. After one has done his best, after hours of continued writing, one perhaps stretches oneself with relief from the tense position quite unconsciously taken, to find—still other work ahead, the phrasing and so-called "marks of expression" (nuance). A possible hint of metronomic marks, too, must be indicated. "About eighty," Mr. MacDowell would say, allowing a saving latitude always. Then come a few trenchant directions. And, finally, perhaps the name of the composition is the very last thing to settle upon. After the little black marks on white paper are all nicely in order, the ear has to be finally and forever satisfied. This necessitates repeated trials. It means taking a composition around with one mentally, hearing it, deciding in one's own mind if this or that alteration shall be made, or if it shall stand just as it came at first. and then when the engraver submits the first proof all in white notes on green paper (to save

the eyes in making corrections), lo, and behold! various and sundry mistakes, sins of omission and commission confront one! These proofs must be carefully gone over. Not once, but twice and thrice will the printer return them. When the composition, or book, is finally given into the composer's keeping, he almost hesitates to open it lest some elusive sharp, flat or natural or note in line or space has either been overlooked, in spite of all the care expended, or with the perversity of inanimate things, slipped a bit in the engraving processes and is there to confound one! And until the edition is sold there is no way to rectify it save by a personal touch in each copy. I remember to have seen one of these early editions of Mr. MacDowell's, in Boston, at one time. It was the "Sea Pieces." There were several pen insertions of recreant accidentals. It has happened thus to other composers. It is all too bad when a body works night and day to have it "just right." The task of putting down his thoughts was never shirked by Mr. MacDowell. The more complex, the more did he strive to get it in intelligible shape for the one who should "stand between," namely, the mediator, the interpreter. He said one day, in

speaking of the Symphonies of Beethoven and Schubert, that in that day little or no opportunity was afforded for the presentation of these masterpieces, and so the composers wrote on and on just for the pleasure of writing. If they had heard their works they doubtless would have pruned them somewhat; "and," he added, "a composer only takes pleasure in writing. After that all is misery." Fellow composers of even most modest offerings can appreciate the inwardness of that remark. However they would not wish to have anyone believe that Mr. MacDowell meant to be taken too literally. As is well known he was somewhat averse to playing his own compositions or hearing them played, and one can easily understand why "All is misery," on hearing an immature, careless student essay art forms.

This appreciation began and shall end with an allusion to Mr. MacDowell as a teacher. He could not only express music in a great way, but he had a human interest in his students, being sensitive, sympathetic and of great patience. He believed in developing the "inner vitality" of the pupil, and insisted on preserving the individuality. In his lectures on music history at Columbia University, this subject, history, took on new meaning. The

dry, traditional historical situation became instinct with life, the teacher's whimsical imagination and poetic nature supplying much original texture. In the "artists' class," many helpful things were said. Here are a few illustrations he gave at different times. As one pupil aptly expressed it "They all made a picture in the mind which stays." Who could forget a comparison referring to a delicate pianissimo passage—"To be played as if a butterfly had passed and this was its shadow." Or this direction for a passage in the Prelude in C minor, Chopin:—"The opening chords coming from far away or from nowhere. The phrase suggests Wordsworth's 'Daffodils'." The F sharp minor Sonata (Schumann) is "Like a picture by a Swedish artist depicting the death of Wotan. A tremendous mass of rock and clouds on first looking at it, but after awhile one sees shapes and outlines of Wotan and the gods very dimly. It is on a large scale." Last line of the first slow part "Spreads out as some unimportant incident will in a dream." In "Kreisleriana" (Schumann), the second variation, his directions were these: "Play the under part softly with the mistiness that things have in a dream where all sorts of queer things happen as a matter of course." In the first

variation, when some one had struck a wrong note in the soft part, "You must be careful not to do that. You don't want your fairy with a pug nose."

He was very likely to speak his mind freely concerning the work of others as well as his own, as some of the following quotations will illustrate. There was no hint of the make-believe in him. He said one day, "The first time I heard 'Tristan,' I could not sit it out, the sounds were so disagreeable to me, though now I realize how beautiful it is. The new generation seems to take to these things naturally."

It would hardly be supposed that a poet of Mr. MacDowell's nature would be drawn towards Brahms; for instance, concerning this composer, Mr. MacDowell somewhere says, humorously: "Brahms' music suggests 'Humpty Dumpty' in 'Alice in Wonderland,' where he sits lost in thought until he suddenly says, 'Impenetrability'. That is the word." At the same time, much of this abstruse composer's work was admired by Mr. MacDowell, who gladly gave him his due. He, however, stoutly maintained that there was a wide distance between the best of Brahms' writings and those less good, and did not hesitate to express himself strongly in this belief to those un-

reasonable Brahmsites who "admired everything from the pen of their idol, and, furthermore, pitied people who did not agree with them."

Mr. MacDowell did not write easily. He often spent a week on a page and then tore it up. Doubtless his most productive periods were when far away from city sights and sounds. He could then give himself over to the best of peaceful conditions in his country home. Of his estimate of his works we have little record, but to the pupils fortunate enough to have studied them with him, he made many amusing comments. He gave glimpses of his thought concerning certain numbers of his own in a frank engaging way wholly characteristic of the man. For instance, in speaking of the "Intermezzi," Op. 10, he once said: "It was re-written and lengthened after hearing from a famous artist who complained that it was 'too short to put between pieces and not long enough to play by itself'—and then he never played it!" Of the Fugue, in Op. 10: "I'm very proud of that fugue. It was written just after finishing counterpoint, and those four notes are used in every possible way, upside down, backwards and forwards. After

I played it for Raff, he said to me, 'Never let me hear that thing again.' Raff did not like fugues."

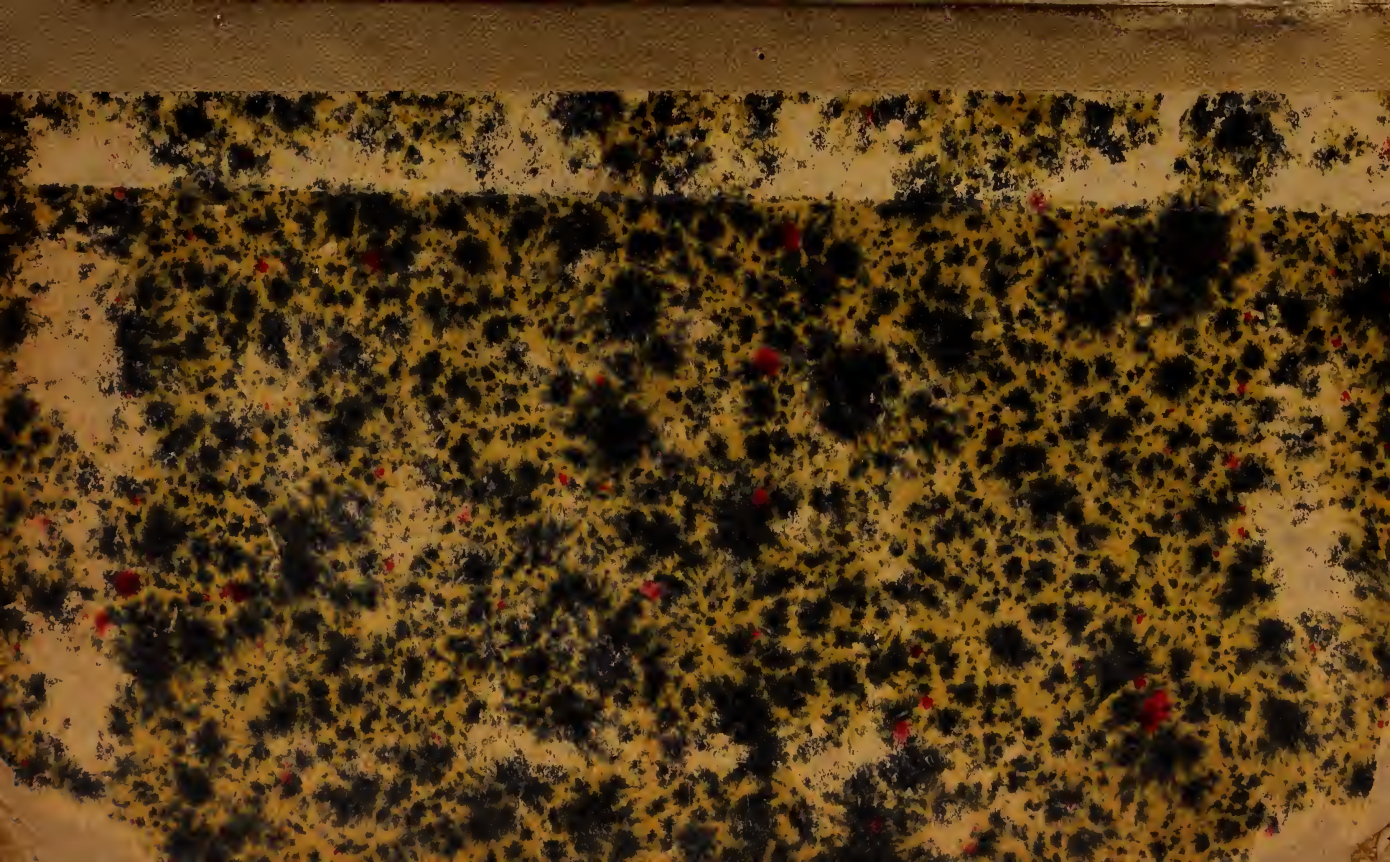
And again: " 'The Presto' looks so innocent and easy, very much as Stevenson expressed it when he said, 'It really looks like music if you hold it far enough away.' "

Mr. MacDowell would not wish to be taken too literally in the titles for his compositions, for he remarked: "Few of my things have been written with the idea of describing the thing itself; rather the atmosphere surrounding it. There is the dramatic and the suggestive way of playing. Some music is declamatory and some receives its character from tone-color rather than from rhythmical and dramatic effects."

Perhaps no piano number of the composer has pleased more people than the "Water Lily," from "Woodland Sketches." In describing the interpretation he had in mind, he says: "The melody to be brought out with the thumb in the first part, and the melody kept in that register. The chords in lower part very softly, like the reflection, perhaps, in the dark water. To be played very evenly, passionlessly, as one thinks of a water lily, but with clear sweet tone. The second part questioningly, as Heine questioned the lily, not with

intensity or too much ardor. The whole thing rather passionless and cold."

Such hints are extremely interesting as an index to the author's mood. And all lovers of music will welcome any additional light that will serve to help express the meaning desired by the poet-composer who inscribed the lines. Because, elusive as is much of the music written by Mr. MacDowell, suggestive of atmosphere though it be, replete with charm that is nameless, indefinable, it belongs to the people who will do their best to present it worthily, and while doing that best will be lifted towards a higher appreciation of art, and share with him a larger view than was theirs before its study. There are artists now, in quiet corners of the earth, as well as those who are before the public in a concert-giving way, who will interpret to us the messages of this bard. He indeed is

. . . . . "missed
Most when his reed lies mute,"

but he has so lived his musical life that the records left of that life will bless the world.